

An Arkansas Private

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On the outskirts of a demolished German town huddled in a machine gun emplacement were two American soldiers. The tall, lean but rugged private lay slovenly in the mud and snow. His beard of three weeks coated with a thin layer of ice was all that showed as the sergeant bellowed his command to clean the machine gun. Every inch of his six foot four-inch brawn and muscle turned slowly as he opened one eye and drawled, "O.K., Sarge, but this is one hell of a time to get ideas like that." He brushed the fallen snow from his face with the frozen glove that enclosed his right hand. "Well, Sarge," he said, "You know this place reminds me of back home in Arkansas." He looked lazily at his surroundings, avoiding the obvious structure of a machine gun in front of him. "Course, Sarge, the houses are sort of torn up a bit, but it still looks like home to me. Have you ever been huntin', Sarge?" He hesitated for a minute. "'Course you have with these lousy Jerries, but I mean good old coon huntin'." He received no reply. The sergeant had crawled back to the aid station to fill his canteen. "Those damn sergeants never

would listen to me anyhow," he uttered slowly as he sank down in the snow and mud to resume his slumbering position.

An hour had passed of intermittent silence, broken only by the sound of long range artillery and an occasional motor shell dropping close by.

Suddenly out of nowhere, came a loud boisterous command from a man of small stature standing by the well dug hole. "Hey, you," he said harshly, "Who's in charge of this gun?" The figure moved very slowly. "What's your trouble," he stammered as he recognized his company commander. "Yes, sir," he retorted sharply. "I want you to take that gun apart and name the pieces for me," the captain said. "I guess you still need some basic training." The fire gleamed in his face as he moved toward the captain. He looked at the gun and slowly turned to the captain and replied, "I'll clean that gun, sir, but all the pieces come out the barrel, and they are all aimed at you." As the captain backed away with amazement and walked rapidly away, the private sank slowly back in the emplacement to resume his interrupted slumber.